REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the final Office Action dated June 7, 2006. Claims 1 to 12, 14 and 15 are pending in the application, with Claim 13 having been cancelled. Claims 1 to 7, 12 and 14 have been amended, and Claims 1 and 12 are in independent form. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

The specification was objected to based on alleged informalities. The term "flashed" at page 11, line 8 of the specification has been replaced by the term "flushed". Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this objection are respectfully requested.

Claim 3 was objected to based on alleged informalities. The term "flash" in Claim 3 has been replaced by the term "flush". Reconsideration and withdrawal of this objection are therefore respectfully requested.

Claims 1 to 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0032839 (Yamamoto) in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2004/0037174 (Uchida). Reconsideration and withdrawal are respectfully requested.

First, it should be noted that the U.S. Patent Publication to Uchida is technically not available as prior art. In particular, this reference does not have a § 102(e) date, since its corresponding international application was not published in English. See MPEP § 706.02(f)(1). However, since Uchida has foreign counterparts which were published before the effective filing date of the subject application (see, for example, Japan 2001-357587 and WO 01/97002, which were cited in the Information Disclosure Statement dated March 12, 2004) the rejection over Uchida has been treated on the merits.

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Nevertheless, it is respectfully requested for the Examiner to cite a published counterpart to Uchida if the rejection under § 103(a) is repeated.

The present invention generally concerns a storage unit which is detachable from an information processing apparatus having ejecting means for ejecting the storage unit. The storage unit has a storage medium for storing data from the information processing apparatus and a controller for controlling storage of data into the storage medium. An eject instruction to eject the storage unit from the information processing apparatus is received by the storage unit. A judgment is made by the storage unit as to whether or not the storage unit is in an ejectable state. An eject permission signal is output from the storage unit to the information processing apparatus for ejecting the storage unit by the ejecting means if it is judged that the storage unit is in the ejectable state.

Referring specifically to the claims, independent independent Claims 1 and 12 are respectively directed to a storage unit and a method.

Thus, among its many features, the present invention provides for (i) judging, by a storage unit, whether or not the storage unit is in an ejectable state, and (ii) outputting, from the storage unit, an eject permission signal to an information processing apparatus for ejecting the storage unit by ejecting means if it is judged that the storage unit is in the ejectable state.

By virtue of the foregoing, since the storage unit judges whether the storage unit is in an ejectable state, the structure of an information processing apparatus can be simplified, even if the information processing apparatus accepts different kinds of storage units. Furthermore, the occurrence of ejection of a detachable storage unit at a time when the storage unit should not be ejected is reduced.

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The applied art is not seen to disclose or to suggest the features of the invention of the subject application. In particular, Yamamoto and Uchida are not seen to disclose or suggest at least the features of (i) judging, by a storage unit, whether or not the storage unit is in an ejectable state, and (ii) outputting, from the storage unit, an eject permission signal to an information processing apparatus for ejecting the storage unit by ejecting means if it is judged that the storage unit is in the ejectable state.

As understood by Applicants, Yamamoto discloses a browser apparatus. See Yamamoto, Abstract. In a case where a user operates an eject button, the ejection of a storage medium is not immediately conducted but a routine for performing a write processing required on the system side is started so that after the write processing is completed, a signal indicating the instruction for or permission of ejection of the storage medium is given from the system side to the memory device. See Yamamoto, paragraph 11.

However, nothing in Yamamoto is seen to disclose or suggest that a judgement whether or not a storage unit is in an ejectable state is made by the storage unit itself. Moreover, Yamamoto is not seen to disclose or suggest that it is the storage unit that outputs an eject permission to an information processing apparatus, for ejecting the storage unit by ejecting means if it is judged that the storage unit is in the ejectable state. Rather, Yamamoto is merely seen to disclose that a signal indicating the instruction for or permission of ejection of the storage medium is given from the system side to the memory device.

Uchida is not seen to compensate for the deficiencies of Yamamoto. As understood by Applicants, Uchida discloses a disk drive device in which a disk ejection mechanism comprises authentication control means that outputs a disk ejection instruction

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to a mechanism control, if a disk ejection instruction and authentication information are input. See Uchida, Figures 1 and 6; and paragraphs 8 and 11.

However, nothing in Uchida is seen to disclose that it is a storage unit that judges whether or not the storage unit is in an ejectable state. In addition, Uchida is not seen to disclose or suggest that the storage unit outputs an eject permission signal to an information processing apparatus, for ejecting the storage unit by ejecting means if it is judged that the storage unit is in the ejectable state.

As such, even if Yamamoto and Uchida are combined in the manner proposed in the Office Action (assuming for argument's sake that such combination would be permissible), the result would not teach at least the features of (i) judging, by a storage unit, whether or not the storage unit is in an ejectable state, and (ii) outputting, from the storage unit, an eject permission signal to an information processing apparatus for ejecting the storage unit by ejecting means if it is judged that the storage unit is in the ejectable state, nor would it suggest the attendant benefits provided by such judgment by and outputting from the storage unit.
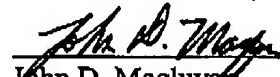
Accordingly, based on the foregoing amendments and remarks, independent Claims 1 and 12 as amended are believed to be allowable over the applied references.

The other claims in the application are each dependent from the independent claims and are believed to be allowable over the applied references for at least the same reasons. Because each dependent claim is deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual consideration of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

No other matters being raised, it is believed that the entire application is fully in condition for allowance, and such action is courteously solicited.

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Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa,

California office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to

our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

John D. Magluyan
Attorney for Applicants
Registration No.: 56,867

FITZPATRICK, CELLA, HARPER & SCINTO
30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, New York 10112-3800
Facsimile: (212) 218-2200

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